The Cheerful Letter

Every place a church; every day the Lord's day; all events blessings; all joy thanksgiving; and all nature and life full of God.—James Freeman Clarke.

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ANNUAL REPORT OF SECRETARY OF CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE

It is the privilege of the secretary of the Cheerful Letter Exchange to submit her annual report for 1930-1931. During this time she has attended to all duties incident to her office.

The chairman of the Exchange, Mrs. Harry A. Stevens, has presided in her gracious manner at all of the regular meetings of the Exchange, held on the first Friday morning of each month from October to May inclusive, at 25 Beacon Street, Boston. Her devotion to the work is evidenced by this faithful attendance under circumstances which might frequently have kept a less interested worker away. The Exchange has been honored by the presence of several officers of the General Alliance, the president of which, Mrs. Thomas G. Rees, has commended the Exchange for conducting a real conference or round table discussion.

The attendance at the monthly meetings has been gratifyingly large; the average number of those present has been fifty-five with an average of thirty-nine Branches represented. Sixty-two Branches have been represented at least once. Your secretary wishes to bring to your attention the inspiration and practical assistance which come from even an occasional visit to one of these conferences. The Barnstable chairman, who for the first time has been able to come to several of them, writes thus: "My being able to attend a few of the meetings at Headquarters has been of much benefit to the local Branch. I hope that you will stress this idea of attendance at the Boston meetings, especially for chairmen of small, country Branches; it is a greater help to them than would appear on the surface. Our work has been more profitable than ever this year with more taking part in it than usual."

During the year several faithful Branch chairmen have been called home. We hold in grateful memory the names of Mrs. Emily E. Boles of Dorchester Channing, Mrs. Philip Wilson of Detroit, Miss Olive Allgire of Eugene, Oregon, Mrs. William H. Hammett of Newport, R. I., and Miss Helen A. L. Anthony of Cincinnati. All of these had been enthusiastic workers for many years. What Mrs. Boles' daughter wrote of her reads like a benediction: "Mother loved her Cheerful Letter work. The preparation of the report of her Christmas work was really her last earthly task, for she was working on this summary the day she went to bed with pneumonia."

During the year five members of the Central Committee have spoken before 26 Alliances, to explain the meaning of Cheerful Letter work and to offer practical suggestions for its pursuance. Renewed activity in these groups has resulted. Program committees who are planning for a "Cheerful Letter Day" are advised to arrange for a speaker early.

When your secretary considers the annual reports of the hard working chairmen of the standing committees of your Exchange, she regrets keenly that time will not permit her to incorporate them in full in her report. Their record of constructive effort along educational lines is remarkable.

The beloved past chairman of the Exchange, Mrs. William B. Nichols, who is in charge of the distribution of Bibles, reports the sending of a total of 82 brand new ones, which includes 48 regular Bibles, 7 teachers' Bibles and 20 Testaments. Besides, at her request, many have been sent directly by

workers.

Mrs. Henry R. Bowser, chairman of the Library Committee, has been helped greatly in her work by Mrs. Isaac Sprague, Jr., who has written for her a large number of letters with tact and discretion. Here follow excerpts from Mrs. Bowser's report:

"Again I wish to commend the co-operation and enthusiasm with which I meet in this work. Without this inspiration I could not do my best work; for after all I am but the organizer and the actual tasks are done by the Branches.

"The business depression has been directly reflected in the Library Department, for there has been a lack of donations of books and of the money for shipping them, with consequently fewer offers of libraries. On the other hand, many of our southern friends have been so absorbed in the struggle to keep body and soul together during the terrible winter of suffering following the severe drought that they have requested fewer libraries and have displayed less interest in community libraries. This shows that the success of our program for educational and spiritual betterment depends on a reasonable degree of physical well-being. Yet, all circumstances being considered, I feel that a creditable showing has been made.

"The majority of libraries, to which contributions have been made, is in schools. These libraries are of utmost importance in enabling teachers to round out their courses. Accessibility of good reading matter is of utmost importance in the development of the character and minds of children and adolescents. In the back country of the South there are few radios, telephones and similar distractions so that we have a better chance to educate these young people in the right way than we could ever hope for in cities. Let us redouble our efforts to take advantage of this great chance. Many of these boys and girls are quietly leading fuller, more intelligent lives because of us. I cannot emphasize too much the importance of these libraries and any other aid which we can give to teachers, many of whom are making real sacrifices for the good of humanity. One such teacher writes from Texas, 'I am a better, braver woman for the help and cheer you noble people have sent me. Surely your organization is true to its name. Our school is out of funds and want and hunger are on every side, but I can give my time as teacher. I pray God that I may be able to teach the children more than what is found in text books.' One such school and teacher aided justify the existence of the Cheerful Letter.

"The community library in the South has its important place and gives both young and old glimpses of the outside world and respite from the grinding cares of their lives. The burning of such a library, that of Miss Lydia Holman at Alta Pass, N. C., the educational, medical and spiritual center for her whole section, was a calamity. With her usual courage she is replacing the loss. Books are pouring in from the many friends she has made through her years of sacrifice and accomplishment. The big thrill of the season's work came recently when the Wellesley Hills chairman informed me that a friend had anonymously given a generous sum for the purchase of books for Alta Pass, and that careful shopping has resulted in 400 books, which were sent to Miss Holman. This makes a total of 744 books sent there this year,—the largest single library of the season.

"Another type of library has its place in communities where educated people live and are supplied with books for which they long but cannot afford to buy. Such is the one recently established at Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia. The need of this library was brought to our attention by the chairman of Community Church, New York City. Its originator writes that 'it has quickened the whole life of the community.' I wish that our Branches could send a stream of volumes here to build upon a firm foundation a library that will become a town institution, thus making a start in Canada of the public library system with which we are blessed. To help these sturdy, self-respecting Scotch and English people is a pleasure and an honor.

"As I have hinted before, in the matter of numbers we have not done very well this year due to the serious financial depression of many months' duration. Nevertheless 5,882 volumes have been sent, while 4,675 magazines were shipped to 88 libraries in twenty-one States and two Provinces of Canada. Five sets of encyclopedias were included. Fifteen new libraries were established. As always All Souls Branch, New York, heads the list with 2,496 books and 3,817 magazines. I cannot speak too highly of the enterprise which has sent 400 more volumes than last year. Wellesley Hills comes second with an even 1,000, a tremendous number from a church which is

not one of the big ones of the country; New Bedford stands third and Buffalo fourth. In all, 36 Branches from six States participated. My great dream in this work is to have, as nearly as possible, all our Unitarian churches on this continent engaged in Cheerful Letter work. It is amazing how much one ardent Cheerful Letterite can accomplish. Let it be the aim of each and every one of us to interest more and more individuals and churches in this tremendously vital and important work."

To your secretary, Mrs. Bowser's dream of Unitarian Churches being universally engaged in Cheerful Letter work does not seem fantastic or difficult of attainment. After all, there is no church so small or so poor that in some way it could not yearly collect and mail to an established library at least five worth while volumes. If the Alliances not represented in this phase of the work had done so this year, more than 1,500 books would have been added to those, which were actually sent, and their influence would have been incalculable. This seems a field in which Junior Alliances might well lend helping hands. The boys and girls of the South, whose advantages are few, are yearning for the books, which languish unopened upon the shelves in the homes of many of your young people. There is nothing that youth enjoys more than now and then to be altruistic; why should not every one encourage their young friends to share with their loss fortunate kind the books which they have outgrown? Your secretary asks you to take seriously to heart the idea of volumes for Library work from every Branch. Why not make the coming year a record one?

Mrs. Rachel Sands, the chairman of the Home Study Department, has been assisted in her work this year by Mrs. Henry R. Austin, who with the help of a group has sent much educational material. Excerpts from Mrs. Sands' annual report follow:

"Two years ago your secretary recommended that two hundred dollars a year be contributed by various Branches for Home Study work. That we are slowly moving toward this goal is evidenced by the fact that slightly more than one hundred dollars was given by twenty-eight Alliances and two friends; this sum was spent for educational magazines, dictionaries, and postage, while a small amount has been reserved to use for summer work. Fifty-three Branches have reported doing some sort of Home Study work. Those outside of New England are the Branches of All Souls and Community Churches, New York City; Church of Our Saviour, Brooklyn; Rutherford, N. J.; Cleveland and Cincinnati, Ohio; Alameda and Hollywood, Cal. The following Branches in Massachusetts have contributed something each month: Dorchester 1st, Hingham, Leominster, Medford, Roxbury 1st, Wollaston, and Winchendon.

"Although our facilities do not now enable us to handle well more than one hundred pupils, we have at present one hundred and three enrolled. Of these 33 are teachers, 35 mothers, 20 boys and girls, and the remaining 20 men and women. We still instruct more boys than girls. The method of giving a boy or girl a worth while book to read, together with a list of questions in regard to it, which must be answered intelligently before another book is sent, is still successful. One boy reads ten books in this way, as well as numerous other articles in Geographic Magazines, while the largest number read by a girl was eight. While the subjects most in demand are English, History and Current Events, they also include elementary Art, Astronomy, Latin and others.

"Some typical students are a woman, teaching her husband Geography and English with the assistance of material and help given her by the Committee; two young girls in Virginia who are studying English History and Household Affairs with the aid of a competent teacher; a group of young people in Georgia, still studying under the leadership of Ruby Paris. Ted Welch, the cripple, who long since graduated, still gratefully keeps in touch with the Department and occasionally does supervised reading.

"Many calls for help come from Arkansas, still a very backward State educationally. We have one mother there, who has read to her son for five years from material sent by the Home Study Committee. Not alone is actual teaching done; thousands of clippings, articles from magazines, cards and pictures have been sent. Most of the pictures have gone to teachers to be hung on their schoolroom walls. A constant stream of letters, asking for information on numberless subjects has been received and answered.

"Beautiful scrap books have been made and donated; some of these were labors of love, patterned by shut-ins. Lynn, Belmont and Medford have contributed unique ones. The Evening Alliance of Greater Boston

collected and arranged artistically a great amount of historical material for a school in Arkansas. Two of our teachers belong to the Evening Alliance of the Second Church of Salem, which is a very much interested group. A Beverly family contributes many valuable books on History and Biography, which are loaned to teachers and students and thus made to serve many.

"In practically every case the required text book has been provided for the student, while as usual the Christmas gift of a book for each Home Study pupil was continued. Friends and Alliances have contributed the large total of 2,401 books this year; this is by far the greatest number ever given. In thanking Alliances and individuals for their share in this work, the chairman wishes to congratulate each and every one because more has been accomplished in every line of Home Study work than ever before."

Your secretary wishes to call your attention to the fact that you are more than half way toward the goal of $200 a year for Home Study work. After you have considered the tremendous amount accomplished by means of your contributions, she is sure that those of you, who this year have given, will continue your contributions next year. Here is another chance for inactive Branches to help Cheerful Letter work along. The amount which can be accomplished with a one dollar bill is astonishing. Did you know that usable dictionaries can be purchased for twenty-five cents each and that the majority of the homes, into which your letters go, are not supplied with them? That is only one example taken from legion. Just decide to help the Home Study Department increase its usefulness next year.

The work of the chairman of the Book and Magazine Club, Mrs. John A. McCaddin, is less spectacular but just as important and engrossing as that of the chairman previously mentioned. Hers has been the task of systematizing the card catalogue of correspondents with the end in view of determining how many people on her list are being adequately taken care of, how many are receiving too much and how many are being neglected. She is attempting to do away with duplication. In order to help her in this, all chairmen who have not already sent in their list of regular correspondents are asked to do so at once.

Here follows in her own words a description of the work she has been doing: "In the first place, 310 double postal cards were sent to members of the Exchange (mostly in the South), who had not been heard from for five years or more. To date all but about 100 have answered. Many of those who replied have been assigned as regular correspondents; there are about 50 waiting to be assigned probably to new chairmen. Again I have assigned 130 new names for 1931. These have been given out in lots of two or three to workers, from the suburbs of Boston to Redlands, California, and even as far south as San Antonio, Texas. Names assigned recently have been checked up and the attention of workers called to those who have had little or no correspondence."

Your secretary wishes to commend this policy of caring for the interests of those people already on your lists. To her it seems more important to look out for old friends than to add new ones. It is Mrs. McCaddin's intention never to add a new name to our membership until the person's references have been followed up and satisfactorily given.

Another part of Mrs. McCaddin's work is the editing of the column of appeals in the Magazine. One of her assistants has prepared this copy for the editor and another has helped with the correspondence. This year 223 appeals have been published in the magazine, of which 53 were from new members.

Mrs. McCaddin further says, "Once more, I want to ask chairmen not to send clothing and money to their correspondents. New chairmen are often besieged with such bequests and do not know just what to do. We can have no way of definitely knowing; so let us be Cheerful Letter and not Social Service workers.

"I have enjoyed the year and the work, although at times it is very tiresome and the appeals too pathetic. Bits of humorous appreciation make me feel that I am really helping some unfortunates to see the silver lining. For example, a minister, now studying in a northern Theological School, writes, in reply to a question about a would-be correspondent, 'Please take her into your Exchange. With cheerful letters and the *Grace of God*, it is possible to live even in her town.' "

It is cheering to read the optimistic report of Miss Edith L. Jones, who has charge of the funds raised by the sunshine bags for publishing the *Cheerful Letter*

Magazine. It follows: "It is with pleasure that I report all bills paid—with a balance of nearly $100 to start next year. This balance does not include our special fund, given us by the New England Associate Alliance's generosity, from which $30 were taken to pay for subscriptions for shut-ins.

"The co-operation of the chairmen has made this possible. The following Branches have given the largest amounts for this purpose; they are named according to the size of the donations: All Souls, New York, King's Chapel, Lynn, Dorchester First, First Church, Roxbury, Wellesley Hills, First Church, Boston, Second Church, Boston, and Hingham."

Your secretary wishes to call your attention to the fact that, although the named Branches gave generously, you were able to "go over the top" only because of the combined effort of the many, and that the small Alliance, which could only send a dollar from its hard earned funds, is just as deserving of credit.

Miss Jones closes her report thus: "Congratulations to the above honor roll and sincere appreciation to each and all who have contributed. Surely at this annual meeting we stand firmly on our feet."

With the present circulation of the magazine its modest subscription rate of fifty cents per year is not high enough to pay the expenses of editing, publishing, addressing and mailing it. It is not advisable to raise this rate. Every new subscription helps toward making the publication self-supporting. If all Branches realized this, it is probable that enough more subscriptions would be procured to place the magazine upon a firm financial foundation. Until that time arrives the sunshine bags, which have played their part so well this year, must be used.

The Cheerful Letter is your official organ. It is a well-balanced paper. Each issue carries an undenominational sermon; a column, "With Our Home-Keepers," offering recipes and "handy hints"; a "Page for Children"; a column of health hints; articles of general interest, adapted to the season of the year; some humor and some good poetry. Most important of all, it always includes the "appeals" of the Book and Magazine Club. Because of the last, every chairman and every worker ought to take it, for these "appeals" are the backbone of the work. Many a chairman periodically collects material donated, calls her committee together, and with two or three magazines in hand divides the articles, sending them to the people for whom they seem the best suited. Often the note of thanks, which is returned, starts a regular correspondence. Your secretary frequently hears of "independent workers," who, living far from organized committees, receive their sole directions from the magazine.

The magazine is sent through the generosity of friends to many in the South, who cannot afford to pay for it. That it is cherished is shown time and again by the requests which come for its continuance when lack of funds necessitate stopping a subscription. A correspondent of the chairman at Kingston calls it her "comfort paper." Let every one of you make it your duty to *boom* the *Cheerful Letter Magazine*. It is really obligatory for you to do so, for according to the Rules of the Executive Board of the General Alliance, one of the duties imposed upon the Cheerful Letter Exchange is the publishing and issuing of the magazine.

The question is frequently asked, "What is the best way of circulating the sunshine bag?" That depends entirely upon local conditions. If too many other collections are taken at regular Alliance meetings, it is better to have a number of bags made and taken home by members. The Medfield chairman reports distributing 60 bags. Some chairmen give out a smaller number of bags, which are kept by one group for a month and then are returned, emptied and given to another. Some chairmen pass the bag at every meeting. Others announce a month ahead that the bag will be passed at the next meeting and so collect a considerable sum.

As usual your Secretary sent out in April requests to 220 Branch chairmen listed in the Manual for annual reports. Of these 114 responded. Fifteen States were represented in these reports. Your secretary would greatly appreciate hearing from every Alliance doing Cheerful Letter work. If no accurate record is kept of articles and letters sent, a post card might be mailed with the statement that some work had been done. It is the desire of Headquarters to keep as closely in touch with workers as possible.

The hard-working chairman of All Souls Church of New York City has again the honor of having sent the largest total of things, with 35,861 to the credit of her committee. It will not be amiss to quote here a bit from her report, which shows

something of the method which she employs with such success. "Our Branch Alliance pays no money from its treasury except the $15 for the 30 *Cheerful Letter* subscriptions; all the rest of 'my' money comes through contributions. My appeal goes out once a year—in the autumn (on a postal card to all on the church mailing list)." She further says that this appeal's result enabled her to spend $398.97 for the work. To stimulate interest Dr. Simons printed in the church bulletin several letters from correspondents. It occurs to your secretary that this might be done by other Branches. The church calendar reaches many who never attend Alliance meetings but who might be very glad to help Cheerful Letter work along in some way, if they understood what it is.

The following Branches are given in the order of the number of articles which they sent: Providence First, Hingham, Northboro, Brookline First, Needham and Newton Centre.

Of the 38,690 magazines given, many were dispensed to worthy institutions near-by. Your secretary commends this as a fine piece of Cheerful Letter work. She suggests that many more can easily be collected and distributed with the aid of the Alliance member, who gladly several times a year will deliver a load of them to Hospital, Sailors' Haven or City Home but who will never tie herself down to a routine of regular work. Your distant friends were not forgotten in this distribution. Yet, unless periodicals are sent in large lots by freight or express, it is cheaper to give a year's subscription than to mail an equal number. That Branches are increasingly doing this is shown by the 195 subscriptions reported. This number does not include the *Cheerful Letter*.

Quilt scraps are still prized by far-away correspondents, one of whom wrote from Texas that she could always get plenty of raw cotton for filling and so, if scraps came her way, she could make any number of quilts with no expense, save the thread. Despite the fact that comparatively few women do sewing at home and so have patchwork pieces, 1,512 packages of them found their way from Unitarian homes into others. A tangible expression of appreciation came to the Exchange in the form of a beautiful quilt, which had been pieced by one of your early Kansas correspondents, who had passed away. Her daughter quilted it elaborately and presented it to be sold for the benefit of Cheerful Letter work. A goodly sum was thus realized.

Many of the 875 Christmas boxes, which wended their way south last year, provided gifts, candy and cards for school and community trees. It is difficult to estimate how many were reached by this Yuletide cheer but it seems a conservative estimate that at least 1,200 owed their holiday happiness to the Cheerful Letter. For example, Canton reported one such box holding 125 gifts, Newburgh, N. Y., one with gifts for 52, while Waltham sent the generous number of 12 boxes with 313 articles. Never were such gifts more appreciated, for your Southern correspondents, due to the disastrous effects of the long drought, were poorly equipped to begin the winter. When food is scarce, clothing scanty and fuel hard to get, mothers are obliged to allow Santa Claus to disappoint their children. The hearts of many workers were touched by the expressions of gratitude received, whether in the form of a thankful note, laboriously penned by a small girl, or some token, like a box of gorgeously colored mountain apples, nuts, holly, mistletoe, bits of crocheting and embroidery. Some correspondents even sent turkeys and chickens, the products of their henyards, while one woman baked and despatched a delicious cake, which reached its destination in perfect condition.

The course of the mountain school teacher whose professional future has been made secure by a year at Virginia Teachers College, paid for by a generous member of the Cheerful Letter committee of Syracuse Branch, is approaching its end. Other Branches have helped by raising money to pay incidental expenses. The following extract from a letter from the Principal of the Institution shows the young woman to be worthy. "She is acquitting herself very creditably here. She is manifesting great ability and industry. She gives promise of a useful life. Her personal conduct is satisfactory and she has good standing both with the faculty and the students." Who can measure the influence which this girl will spread when she returns, in all the enthusiasm derived from a year of serious study, to teach children with few opportunities.

The young girl, in whose career at Blue Ridge Mountain School several Branches have been interested, has graduated from the lower school with honors. She has the offer of a service scholarship, which means

an opportunity to earn a part of her board, if she can arrange to live at the school, during her first year as a high school pupil. Several groups have her welfare at heart and it looks as if this chance might be hers for doing a much higher grade of work than would be possible if she daily had to tramp the weary miles to and from home.

The problems of the Cheerful Letter workers remain the same. The unanswered letter and the unacknowledged package still worry many. The self-addressed, stamped envelope, always enclosed, is the first step toward solving this. A sympathetic understanding of busy lives in homes teeming with noisy, small children, where there is no quiet spot to which to retire, and of the limitations of education, which make writing even a short letter a real labor, will pardon reasonably long delays. On the other hand, if it is evident that the failure to write arises from lack of appreciation and interest, by all means drop the delinquent. Your secretary has no patience with the woman who can always find time to write to ask for what she wants and rarely to acknowledge it. To her it was almost refreshing to learn that a Boston chairman objected to her correspondents answering so promptly, until she read "and asking me to send them something, which I know they will appreciate."

Workers find difficulty in interesting as many helpers as they need. The remedy for this varies with the locality. It will be fatal to try to make the woman who despises letter writing take a regular correspondent, but she may be just the one to solicit and collect books for a library. The woman who always ties "granny knots" and is sure to become tired and flustered doing up parcels with a group, may be ready faithfully to clip the bed-time stories and other daily features from her newspaper. Sometimes your secretary thinks that a mistake is made in attempting to make very active workers all at once; be satisfied with a little at first and more will often be offered. Also advertise the work and its results. Here follow the experiences of the chairman of the committee of the Church of the Saviour, Brooklyn, N. Y., in her own words: "At present one of the Parcel Post clerks in our General Post Office gives me large packages of silk and other pieces every few weeks. Later I take him some of the letters of thanks to show to his mother, from whom he gets them. He saw me mailing so many bundles that he became interested when I told him what they were for. A seamstress we have employed for years told one of her customers about the work and now she sends me twice a year (at her own expense) huge boxes of beautiful, new samples from a wholesale concern. A trained nurse, who was in our family for a short time, became interested and joined my committee (I do not know to what church she goes) and, although she has moved to California, she is still one of my best workers." The chairman of Harriet W. Holden Evening Alliance of Leominster has interested the small daughter of a woman employed in the same office in a child in the South and the two are exchanging letters. She adds, "One little girl here has all the advantages and the other one none, but they are much interested in each other and we think it is a fine thing for them."

There probably never will be a Cheerful Letter Committee with too much money to spend. Branch appropriations for it vary from nothing (one small Branch allows 50 cents) to $150. Some committees manage on just what is allowed, while others raise more or take a great deal from their pockets. A lone worker in California, who is allowed $10, reports using fifty of her own hard-earned dollars. A Michigan worker, whose Branch can afford nothing in this line but who on account of family conditions is obliged to be much at home and so inactive, makes this work her Alliance contribution and last year spent more than $90 upon it. She writes, "How *could* one fail to realize the value of even a small portion of the work of the Cheerful Letter when one receives such messages of gratitude?"

Never has the problem of dealing with the correspondent who breaks the rule about asking for material aid loomed so large. The terrible drought of last summer, followed by a winter of unemployment, aggravated by that and by business conditions, brought untold suffering to our friends, who at best eke out precarious livelihoods. We cannot blame mothers for asking for money and clothes, when their children are hungry and almost naked. The West Newton chairman has summed it up thus, "My greatest problem is to know what to do when pitiful letters show material aid to be a greater need than letters and books. It seems heartless to tell a mother to "cheer up," when crops have failed, children cannot go to school for lack

of shoes and she fears she will be forced to place her little ones in an institution." An excerpt from a letter written to the chairman of Salem Second Church is typical: "I guess you have heard about the dry weather in North Carolina. My garden dried up and our tobacco dried up and hung down the stalk and we had some rain come on the top leaves and it curled up and was black. We sold it and didn't get but thirty dollars. We live on rented land and had to pay half and we have to buy flour and something to eat. People are almost starving."

Your secretary admits that it is difficult to restrain oneself from sending help in such cases at once. Yet—your head ought to rule your heart. No social service worker of experience advocates relief from a distance. Cases require investigation; needs must be weighed; correspondents tend to paint conditions blacker than they are; money given as such is often spent unwisely; *one* family helped by a Cheerful Letter worker will be the cause of *dozens* of letters sent by its neighbors.

It is fortunate that a solution of the problem has been found for certain cases, as will be seen from the following, given in the own words of your chairman, Mrs. Stevens. "In specific instances material aid seemed to be absolutely necessary. Happily after consultation with Dr. Robert C. Dexter of the Social Relations Committee of the American Unitarian Association a plan was formulated, whereby many of our families have received temporary relief from the Red Cross or Family Welfare Societies. The Central Committee of the Exchange feel gratitude to Dr. Dexter for his sympathetic understanding of the situation and his helpful co-operation in a relief program, which has brought material aid to many of our families and at the same time enabled us to keep within our rules."

Your secretary adds the information that by no means all the families investigated were found to be needy. Workers who wish to report cases should first write to ask the correspondent if she wishes Red Cross or other relief. Often this has resulted in the withdrawal of the request, showing that conditions were not so bad as had been supposed. If the correspondent desires it, the letter describing conditions should be forwarded to Mrs. Stevens, who will send it to the investigator.

Yet, with all its problems and discouragement, the majority of Cheerful Letter chairmen are almost unanimously enthusiastic over it. Your secretary has had so many expressions of appreciation of its value that she scarcely knows which to choose. From St. Louis comes this brief statement, "Problems nil. Love it!" From Billerica the word is sent, "My correspondents tell me all their joys and sorrows. I am *sister, auntie, grandma* and *dear friend* to them. I hope to be able to continue the work for many years." The Northboro chairman, who is forced by ill health to resign her office, writes, "I have been so wonderfully blessed in this work, as we all are when we take a definite stand in serving others."

Your secretary reminds you that you often have been told that lack of understanding among *nations* is a great cause of war. Has it not occurred to you that many of the internal problems of *your own country* would be solved if its various groups, racial, social, sectional and what-not understood each other more clearly? In these days of unrest it is good to know that the Cheerful Letter Exchange is promoting such understanding. The following excerpt from the report of the chairman from the Evening Alliance of Greater Boston is illustrative of this point: "Since our Branch was first organized, one Virginia family has been on our list of correspondents. It is such links as this, between the different sections of our great country, that (to my mind) make Cheerful Letter work so valuable. Making friends between the North and South is a high type of missionary work, and surely stimulating educational desire is going to tell in the backward States."

In closing, your secretary commends for your attention and consideration a thought voiced by the chairman from Weston Branch, a beloved past secretary of the Exchange, who after describing a correspondent, whom she has had for 33 years and who is now ninety years old, adds, "To send a word of cheer to the lonely and out of one's abundance to send something to those less fortunate, who otherwise would have little to brighten their lives is an inspiration and an uplift. I do enjoy the work."

Respectfully submitted,

Ethel Lane Hersey,

Secretary.

THE BOOK AND MAGAZINE CLUB

Send all offers and requests for this department to Mrs. J. A. McCaddin, 21 Ashfield St., Roslindale, Mass.

Please remember, when you see a request for a book in the Book Club, to write a card asking *"Shall* I send such a book to such a person?" before sending it, else the person who requests it may receive several copies. When any one writes directly to you, asking for a book offered by you, send a card to Mrs. McCaddin, saying that you *have* sent it. When you receive more requests than you can meet, send those to the Book Club to be printed here.

SPECIAL NOTICES

It will greatly aid those who are sending books, magazines, cards, and so forth, if all our correspondents who send requests for their children will take pains to mention their names and ages. Lacking such information, one is likely to make mistakes; for a boy of twelve and a girl of seven are not usually interested in the same things.

When writing to the Exchange for the first time, correspondents should always give, as reference, the name and address of their clergyman.

When correspondents move to a new address, notice should be sent either to our headquarters, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass., or to those persons who have been sending books and magazines.

It is necessary to state positively that the Cheerful Letter Exchange is not a "clothing bureau" and not a "charitable" society in the usual sense of the word. We do not undertake to send correspondents money, clothing or household goods. Letters asking for that sort of assistance cannot receive attention. Letters not signed cannot be printed.

Many people do care for just the kind of friendly service for which we are organized. We limit our efforts to them and their wishes.

Those who enjoy receiving books and magazines are asked to remember that they, in their turn, can give much pleasure if they will take pains to write to the persons who send such reading matter. In cases where no word of response goes back—not even to say that the books or magazines were received—senders may suppose the parcels were not welcome. Let us each do our share.

APPEALS

1. I wish to take this opportunity of thanking each and every one who in any way answered my appeal of a year ago in the magazine. I believe I asked for sewing material for the girls and helps on the Bible for myself. I have received all kinds of material for a Sunday School. Some misunderstood about the age that I teach, but when material was sent to me for other ages, I passed it on where it could be used. My class is made up of young folks between the ages of 14 and 20 and I wish every one of you might see them. I am sure you never saw a finer bunch of youngsters. I at least think so. We were in the drought-stricken country last year but are hoping for better crops the coming season. Farm life is a hard but happy life. I wouldn't trade with anyone. We are only renters, but are hoping to some day own a home. Again I want to thank each and every one and hope you may pass my way again. Mrs. J. A. Taylor, Slaton, Tex.

2. Mrs. Blanche Mikel, Rugby, Va., sends many thanks to all who have sent her cheer and if not asking too much would like to have "The Needlecraft" magazine and some embroidery thread.

3. I would appreciate some quilt pieces, reading and bits of lace. Thanking all for past cheer, I am, Mrs. A. J. Wright, R. 1, B. 120, Benton, Ark.

4. Mrs. A. S. Tyson, P.O.B. 251, Ansonville, N. C., hopes to see her letter in print. Her husband is dead and she has three children to care for. They would enjoy reading of any kind. Any scrap pieces and adult reading would appeal to her very much. She also sends thanks for reading sent them in the past.

5. I am seventeen years old, in the ninth grade at school and eager for good reading. We are not able to buy any books or embroidery material, so perhaps some friends will remember me. Miss Ruth Furches, Green Cove, Va.

6. I have been a long time thanking the one who sends me the *Cheerful Letter* magazine. I surely have received lots of good from it, and I wonder if someone

would like to send me some books, and things to entertain a boy of ten, who has been ill. I would also like to make a rag rug. Mrs. J. L. Brooks, Bray, Okla.

7. I received the *Cheerful Letter* paper for the first time a few days ago and think it is great. I sure thank the one who sends it. I love to read but we are so poor and work so hard for a living that it is impossible to buy reading matter. We have eight children, ages 2 to 20; five girls and three boys. We get so discouraged, and I told my husband if some one would send us reading or sewing material it would brighten our days a great deal. We cannot go anywhere. I remain, as ever, your lonely friend, Mrs. Emma Plowman, R. 2, Mt. Croghan, S. C.

8. Mrs. Estie Mitchell, R. 1, B. 120, Crossville, Ala., writes that she has had much sickness in her family and hopes the *Cheerful Letter* friends will send cheer to her and her sister, in the way of reading and sewing. They are both invalids and depend upon a younger sister and Mrs. Mitchell's husband to care for them. Also in the family is her father, aged 80, and her uncle, aged 84. She receives the *Cheerful Letter* magazine and never can thank the donor enough for the cheer it brings.

9. I am a young married lady and desire reading matter for myself and husband. We are in the drought-stricken area and are unable to buy reading. I could also use some quilt scraps. Thanking you in advance, I am, Mrs. E. A. Parker, R. 2, Mountain View, Okla.

10. Mrs. John Nolen, R. 1, B. 6, Elamsville, Va., is the mother of four children; boys 8 and 4, girls 6 and 2. She would appreciate story and picture books to amuse them and bits of cloth and embroidery thread for herself to pass away the lonely hours.

11. I have just read in your magazine that cheer will be sent to the sick and lonely. I have three children, two boys, age 12, and a girl, age 7. I am in poor health and will be thankful of any good reading and picture books for the children. Mrs. C. W. Whittle, Gordon, Ala.

12. Mrs. Etta M. Curlee, R. 3, Polkton, N. C., says when the *Cheerful Letter* magazine arrives she sits down and reads it all at one time. She has two little boys, ages 7 and 4. She would like more reading, and pictures for the little ones.

13. Mrs. J. B. Alley, c/o G. M. M. Apple, R. 7, Reidsville, N. C., wishes some one to send her the book entitled "In His Step."

14. I am a young married woman and live in a very lonesome place. I hope some good friend will remember us with some good reading. I enjoy sewing, too. Mrs. Henry Cogburn, Leo, Tex.

15. Mrs. Mertie Powers, Brandon, N. C., hasn't heard from the members for a long time and wishes some cheer for her family. She has three boys and six girls and they all like to read and she also likes quilt scraps of any kind.

16. Will you welcome an old friend back with you? It has been six years since I have heard from you and I certainly missed the good cheer. I have lost my husband since we left Colorado and my oldest daughter is married. I have five children in school. The two oldest girls will graduate from the eighth grade this year; ages 16 and 14. The other girls' ages are 12 and 9 and the boy is 7. For the past five years it has been quite a struggle to keep us all going. We all love to read and hope some one will favor us in this way. Sewing material would be appreciated also. Mrs. Grace Hayes, Watsonville, Calif.

17. Mrs. Willie Cooper, B. 6, Higginson, Ark., thanks all for past kindnesses and as her health is bad and she is obliged to stay home, she would like anything to make quilts. Her husband is crippled and has to use crutches. Mrs. Cooper has four children, ages 12, 9, 7 and 2.

18. I haven't had any cheer for a long while and still hope to be remembered. I have twelve children and any kind of cheer would help. I would like some reading matter and sewing of any kind. Mrs. Dora Barker, Grant, Va.

19. I wish to thank all those who sent me cheer while living at Drumore, Pa. On account of sickness and moving I may have overlooked some and not sent thanks, so please pardon me. I received a nice book from Mrs. Eugene Capelle with her name, but no state. I could not write her, but I certainly appreciated the book and thank her many times. I especially want to thank a lady by the name of Mrs. Tibbets who sent embroidery thread and bed-time stories. The little boys surely did enjoy the stories. I have moved to Christiana and every one around me are total strangers. I would like some books and quilt pieces to help pass the lonely hours. Your cheer has been wonderful and I hope I will not be forgotten. Mrs. Effie Anderson

R.F.D. 2, Christiana, Pa.

20. Mrs. R. J. Blevins, Rugby, Va., thinks the *Cheerful Letter* friends have forgotten her, it has been such a long time since she last heard. She has ten children and an invalid mother to care for. Mrs. Blevins works hard and gets very blue and takes this opportunity to ask for quilt pieces, embroidery thread and magazines in the way of cheer.

21. I would like to hear from some *Cheerful Letter* friends again. Some one sent me a book for which I send thanks. I would enjoy more reading material if convenient for someone to remember us. I have three very small children and my husband is crippled. I don't think he can work much more, but I am thankful that he is still here and we are trusting in the Lord to see us through. Mrs. J. L. Slawter, Callahan, Fla.

22. Mrs. Marie Hall, 1612 Mercer Ave., N.W., Roanoke, Va., writes about the wonderful *Cheerful Letter* paper and compliments us about the good work being done. Her eyes have gone back on her lately, but she hopes we will remember the children with reading material. She writes a very appreciative letter.

ST. THOMAS

An Island of the Caribbean

St. Thomas, second largest island of the group of islands and islets acquired by the United States in 1917 from Denmark for the purchase sum of twenty-five millions, lies in the West Indies about forty miles east of Porto Rico.

It is a tiny strip of land thirteen miles long by three deep at its widest part, the total area of the three main islands being a trifle over one hundred and thirty-two square miles. It was on his second voyage that Columbus discovered them.

Their historical progress for the past three hundred years displays a truly colorful picture, ranging from the earliest days of European overseas expansion and colonization up to a highly developed commercial activity during the middle and latter part of the last century.

Those were halcyon days for the inhabitants. St. Thomas boasted as the emporium of the West Indies. Her capacious and landlocked harbor teemed with sailing vessels of various nationalities, discharging their valuable cargoes for transhipment to South American republics and neighboring West Indian islands. From these latter, merchants or their representatives called to select and stock their wares from the big wholesale dealers.

Since 1870, however, with the onset of steamship navigation, direct calls and better facilities of trade offering elsewhere, together with the steady growth of modern commercial development, a gradual waning of prosperity became evident, and ever since a steady decline has been witnessed.

Shortly before the World War, through the initiative of the Hamburg American Line, the fallen commercial prosperity of the island had been given a certain impetus forward and onward, when suddenly, like a bolt from a clear sky, the war was sprung upon the world, shattering to pieces every fabric of prospect and hope.

About this time came the transfer of the islands then known as the Danish West Indies, and now renamed the Virgin Islands, under American sovereignty and naval administration. There followed a rise in the living standard of the people. With higher wages for labor of every kind, real estate owners benefited as well as those dealing in commodities. And for another decade the boom of prosperity arose. This, however, proved merely an inflated condition, for today what with the present world depression everywhere, the islands have presented themselves to the nation as an insurmountable problem, whose economic upkeep has become an irksome burden to maintain.

The opinion is shared by many that the unwise application of Federal laws contributed in no small measure to the present economic stagnation. Others are of the conviction that if the land could be made to produce some staple product a market could be found. The islands are very small, with a scanty rainfall. The topography of the land is hilly, spare, no forest, a scorching sun pouring down the year round, and it is small wonder much cannot be done agriculturally. Even though it is possible to raise crops of some kind these can be fit only for local consumption. On a commercial basis the prospects are nil, compared with the overwhelming production of the larger Porto Rico, Santo Domingo and Cuba.

Points of interest to travelers are few—"Louisenhoj," if I may mention the best, eight hundred feet above sea level, with its enchanting views, rivalling in sheer beauty

even the great bay of Naples. Several charming sandy beaches, ideal for surf bathing, indent the coast all around.

The islanders are sober and law-abiding, polite, industrious and intelligent. They have asked for a free port, the lifting of certain Federal laws and the development of the harbor as a port of call for ships, as their chief means of support.

Two months ago a change was made from the Navy Department to the Department of Interior upon the recommendation of an expert in government. Under this new department ways and means have been formulated and projected. Plans are now in their first stages of operation, with the confident expression that these Virgin Islands will eventually emerge in the light of a new and better day.

(*Written especially for The Cheerful Letter by our reader and loyal friend, Felix Padilla of St. Thomas.*)

A comrade will more than double your courage and wisdom, more than halve your fear and trials.

FACTA NON VERBA

"Deeds, not Words:" I say so, too!
And yet I find it somehow true
A word may help a man in need
To nobler act and braver deed.
—*Selected.*

REQUEST FOR EXTRA COPIES OF JUNE 1931 ISSUE

There was an unusual demand for copies of our June issue. We really need a few more copies to pass on to some who have not had one. As the printer's supply is exhausted, the chairman of the Exchange will be grateful to anyone who, after reading her own, is willing to share it with another. Copies sent to Mrs. Harry A. Stevens, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, will be much appreciated. Our sincere thanks to all who help us in this way.

Faith builds a bridge from this world to the next.

THE CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE

Mrs. H. A. Stevens, Chairman, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.
Miss Ethel L. Hersey, Secretary, Hingham, Mass.
Miss Edith L. Jones, Treasurer of Sunshine Funds, 65 Langdon Street, Cambridge, Mass.

ITS PURPOSE

To cheer and comfort those who are ill, lonely, or discouraged, through the exchange of letters and by gifts of books and magazines.

To help those who live far from schools, or who wish to continue their studies by means of correspondence with a teacher.

To give to those living far from church some of the helps which churches give. One good sermon or similar article is printed in each number. These sermons are never doctrinal, but present only such simple religious truths and principles as are agreed on by all churches.

WHERE TO WRITE

1. *Letters paying for subscriptions to the paper,* fifty cents a year, should be sent to the Cheerful Letter Exchange, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass. Checks or postal orders should be made payable to the Cheerful Letter Exchange.

2. *Letters asking for correspondents* should be sent to the Chairman, Mrs. J. A. McCaddin, 21 Ashfield Street, Roslindale, Mass.

3. *Letters asking for help in studying at home* should be sent to Mrs. George O. Sands, Brimble Avenue, North Beverly, Mass.

The Home Study Committee has on hand a variety of schoolbooks which may be used by students either at home or in the schoolroom. The aim of the teachers is to help in any study where help is needed. Often this may fit a person for a higher grade of work.

4. *Letters about the establishment of Circulating Libraries* should be sent to Mrs. Henry R. Bowser, 36 Lancaster Street, Cambridge, Mass.

Circulating Libraries have been established in isolated communities of twenty-seven States, where public libraries and other educational privileges are not available; also in many schools and colleges in rural and mountain districts. A Circulating Library will be started in any small community that is in need of one, if proper location and care can be furnished and satisfactory references given.

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